

accepted domestically by Newfoundlanders and Atlantic Canadians?

**Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council):** Mr. Speaker, the course of action that was taken and the proposal offered was made with the best intentions and in the best interests of Newfoundland, the Atlantic provinces and, indeed, all of Canada. Our desire is to try to achieve an arrangement and a settlement that will be in the interests of all Atlantic Canadians and all Canadians.

#### ATTENDANCE AT FINAL NEGOTIATIONS

**Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops—Shuswap):** Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Prime Minister just indicated that, indeed, at the urging of the Minister of Transport he did apologize yesterday to the Premier of Newfoundland. During his response he indicated that there had been an inadvertent breakdown in communications. Yesterday morning, the Minister of Fisheries on a television program indicated that the decision to exclude the Government of Newfoundland, the fishermen, and the fishing industry from the final negotiations was as a result of France demanding it. What is the answer to this question? Did France demand the exclusion, or was there a breakdown in communications at the official level?

**Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans):** Mr. Speaker, if the Hon. Member would check the transcript I think he would find that the word demand was not used on that program to which he refers. In fact, when officials of two Governments decide to get together to sit down and sign or initial an agreement on the basis of many negotiations and discussions which have preceded that occasion, if one party or the other requests that only certain persons be present, from a diplomatic perspective I think it is only appropriate that the other party comply. At the same time perhaps Hon. Members could recognize that this agreement is merely an agreement to negotiate two parallel agreements by the end of 1987, both of which will bring substantial benefit to the fishermen and the people of Atlantic Canada.

#### POSITION OF FRENCH GOVERNMENT

**Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops—Shuswap):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries. Reports from his Atlantic Canada Regional Advisory Council have indicated that the Government of France, in a sense, demanded that the Government of Newfoundland, the fishing industry, and the fishermen involved be excluded from any final negotiations and that the agreement simply be made between the Government of Canada and the Government of France. Was it France's request that these major players, the people on the receiving end of this decision in a negative way, be excluded, and the Government of Canada agreed to that?

**Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans):** Mr. Speaker, I have no evidence nor am I responsible for the diplomatic relations between our two countries to the effect

that any demands, to use that term, were made by France in this matter.

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### CANADA POST CORPORATION

#### FUTURE OF RURAL POST OFFICES

**Mr. George Baker (Gander—Twillingate):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister in charge of Canada Post said it in this House yesterday:

The Canada Post Corporation has advised me that it has no intention of closing any rural post offices in Canada.

Any reasonable person would assume from that statement that there will be no closings of any post office buildings nor any reduction in the numbers of postmasters and postmistresses in Canada. If Canada Post told the Minister that yesterday, could the Minister answering for Canada Post today tell us why Canada Post Corporation is telling everyone else today that it intends to go ahead with the closure of 3,500 post offices and intends to pass them over to local businessmen to operate as franchises? Was the Minister playing post office with rural Canadians yesterday? If he was, he will get no kisses for that type of deception.

**Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion):** Mr. Speaker, I think the statement made in the House yesterday by the Minister responsible for Canada Post stands on its own. There will not be wholesale closings or changes made in rural structures or closings of rural post offices. What the Minister has put in place over a 10-year period is a system of consultation which will require Canada Post Corporation to advise the Minister of any plans, and to advise the local Member of Parliament so that consultations with respect to options that are available can be considered.

**Mr. Baker:** Mr. Speaker, with answers like that, he is sure to make the Cabinet.

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### STANDARD OF SERVICE

**Mr. George Baker (Gander—Twillingate):** Let me ask the Parliamentary Secretary in all seriousness another question. Can the Member or any Member in this House imagine being on welfare, on Canada Pension disability, or as a veteran having to walk into a local businessman's shop to ask for his Government cheque over the counter when at certain times of the year he perhaps owes half of that cheque to the local businessman—and that is only part of the story? Does the Parliamentary Secretary believe that a part-time businessman can offer the type of dependable and dedicated service that is given by our post masters and postmistresses?